



SPORT



MANITOBA.



BY MILLER CHRISTY.

TURNER & DUNNETT, PRINTERS, LIVERPOOL.

1888.

FOR THROUGH TICKETS
AND
FURTHER INFORMATION
APPLY TO
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LONDON, E.C.



PORT



— IN —



ANITOBA.



BY MILLER CHRISTY.

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LIVERPOOL:

TURNER, AND DUNNETT, PRINTERS, 17A, FENWICK STREET,

1888.



A SPORTSMAN'S CAMP IN MANITOBA.

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Sport in Manitoba.



HERE ARE FEW POINTS upon which a young Englishman contemplating emigration to Manitoba—or, for the matter of that, to any other British colony—usually desires fuller information than he does as to the question, What sport may I fairly expect to enjoy there?

A love of sport seems to be inherent in, and ineradicable from, the British breast. The typical Englishman, as has been observed innumerable times already, wherever he may be, wants a gun and something to shoot therewith. The native-born Canadians now settled in Manitoba are never tired of saying that the young Englishmen who emigrate in such numbers to that country come there solely for sporting purposes, and are no good for any other kind of occupation.

That this statement is a gross exaggeration, does not need saying.

Nevertheless, there is much truth in it. Many and many a young English lad, who has gone out ostensibly to farm, has been tempted by the abundance of game and the frequent opportunities for pursuing it, to neglect his farm (often at critical seasons of the year, when all his time and labour were imperatively needed upon it) to wander over the country in search of sport. Such naturally fall behind in the struggle for a livelihood, and have brought the ridicule of the plodding, matter-of-fact, non-sport-loving Canadians upon the whole race—good and bad alike. At the same time it must be admitted that among the native-born Canadian settlers the word "Sport" in its true sense—a sense which cannot be defined on paper—is all but unknown. When a Canadian goes out, as he says, "for a hunt," he goes out solely in the interests of the pot; and when, accordingly, he fires straight into the thickest part of a settled covey of prairie chickens, he does so unblushingly and without any knowledge that he is doing anything but what is quite right and proper. He does this, moreover, with outrageous No. 1 shot; for smaller is seldom used in the West, and is often difficult to obtain away from the larger towns. In England, the average Canadian settler in Manitoba and the North-West would not be regarded as an ideal sportsman; but in his own country, knowing no better, he has to be excused. In his eyes, the sportsman who habitually shoots his birds upon the wing is looked upon at the same time as both a fool and a prodigy—a fool for going to work in the most difficult manner and a prodigy for being able to kill any birds at all in such a miraculous way!

Nevertheless, all abuses notwithstanding, it is quite certain that the desire on the part of a young intending emigrant to know something beforehand of the various kinds of sport he may expect to meet with is perfectly proper and legitimate. Game there is in considerable abundance, especially at certain seasons of the year. There are practically no restrictions as to the killing of it, except during the close season, and, although game cannot always be reckoned on as an unfailing source of food-supply, still there are times when it may be made to form a most important addition to the usually very scanty larder of

the settler. There can therefore be no good reason why the young English settler should not enjoy a fair allowance of sport as a relief from the arduous labour of the farm, and all such should certainly take out with them a shot gun of some kind. It is absurd in the extreme to take out, as many do, an expensive and ornamental weapon. A strong, useful gun, such as that commonly known in England as the "keeper's gun," and costing not more than 5 guineas at the outside, is the best article to take. This, even if new, should bear clear evidence of having been used: otherwise it is liable to be charged with the import duty of 20 per cent.; but as a rule, guns that have obviously been some time in use, and that are declared to be solely for the owner's use, and not for sale, are admitted duty free, notwithstanding a common belief to the contrary which prevails in this country. There can be no question as to the advisability of taking out a shot gun with one to Canada, rather than buying one there. There are good gun shops in Winnipeg, and most of the guns they sell are of English make; but, quality for quality, they are certainly more expensive, although the purchaser may be assured to the contrary. Undoubtedly the best gun-store, in Winnipeg, is that of Messrs. J. Hingston Smith & Co., of Main Street. At this establishment, not only guns, but sporting requisites of all kinds, may be obtained, while Mr. Cummings, the manager, will, I am sure, be glad to give intending sportsmen the benefit of his knowledge and experience. In fact, the sportsman who cannot obtain all he requires at this store must be very fastidious. Another good gun shop is that of Mr. J. H. Boyd, on Portage Avenue, opposite the Queen's Hotel. Messrs. J. H. Ashdown, and Miller, Morse & Co., hardware dealers (i.e. ironmongers), also sell guns. Although, as I have said, it is best to take an English shot-gun to Canada, I believe that rifles and revolvers (the latter, however, being entirely unnecessary in Manitoba) are best purchased there, unless a weapon of unusual excellence be desired. These belong to the other side of the Atlantic rather than to this. They are the peculiar weapons of the country, and are in consequence purchasable more cheaply there than here. There are many native-born Canadians, brought up in the wilds, where the shot-gun was a comparatively useless weapon when large game was abundant, who would kill partridges with a rifle in preference to a shot-gun.

It is not, in my opinion, worth while to take out from England, either cartridges or ammunition, as these can be purchased exactly the same as here, by the same makers and at not much greater expense, even in many of the smaller towns.

Before proceeding to speak of the various game birds and animals to be met with, it will be well here to give a concise summary of the chief provisions of the Provincial Act for the Protection of Game, which, curiously enough, has been made to include not only game, but fur-bearing animals and many wild birds. The Act has been amended many times by Orders in Council, but now stands as follows:—

None of the animals and birds hereafter mentioned in this section shall be shot at, hunted, trapped, taken, or killed on any Sunday, or between the dates named in any year, nor shall any common carrier carry them, in whole or in part (except the skin) within the said periods.

(a) All kinds of deer, including antelope, elk, or wapiti, moose, reindeer, or cariboo, or their fawns, between Jan. 1 and Oct. 1.

(b) The grouse known as prairie chickens and partridges, between Jan. 1 and Sept. 1.

(c) Woodcock, plover, snipe, and sandpipers, between Jan. 1 and Aug. 1.

(d) All kinds of wild duck, sea duck, widgeon, teal, wild swan, and wild goose (except the snow goose or wavy), between May 1 and Sept. 1.

(e) Otter, fisher or pekan, beaver, musk rat, and sable, between May 15 and Oct. 1.

(f) Marten between April 15 and Nov. 1.

None of the animals or birds named, except the animals under e and f, shall be taken with traps, nets, snares, or similar contrivances, and any such found may be destroyed by anybody; nor shall any swivel guns, batteries, or night-lights be used to kill swans, geese, or ducks; nor shall any beaver or musk rat house be destroyed at any time. Poison or poisoned bait may not be exposed for destroying any animal or bird. No person shall have in his possession any animal or bird mentioned in this section, or any part thereof, except the skin, during the close season, unless he can prove that it was lawfully killed before the close season commenced. No eggs of the birds mentioned may at any time be taken or had in possession. This Act does not apply to Indians on their reserves. No person or corporation shall at any time export any of the animals or birds mentioned. Persons without a domicile in the province must take out a licence costing \$25 to kill any of the animals or birds named; but the minister may grant a free permit to a guest of a resident in the province. Policemen and constables are charged to enforce this Act, and the minister may appoint game guardians for the same purpose. These have certain powers of search, &c., granted to them. No person shall hunt or shoot on the lands of another without permission. Dogs trained for hunting are not to run at large alone.

No person shall at any time shoot or take, or attempt to shoot or take, or expose for sale, or have in possession, any wild bird, except eagles, falcons, hawks, owls, wild pigeons, blackbirds, kingfishers, jays, crows, ravens, snow-buntings, shrikes, bitterns, curlews, cranes, rusty grackles, purple grackles, cormorants, gulls, mergansers, pelicans, and loons, or their eggs or young. The Minister, however, may grant permits to professional taxidermists residing in the province. Any offender shall be liable to pay a penalty of not more than fifty dollars, or less than ten dollars and costs.

This Act, though it has its good points, is in many respects preposterous, inasmuch as many of its provisions are absurdly comprehensive and stringent, and cannot be enforced in a large country, where the population is scanty and scattered, and the minor provisions of the law, consequently, difficult to enforce. As a matter of fact, little or no attempt is made to enforce the minor provisions, though in places the killing of game out of season is very risky. In the North-West Territories a very similar Act is in force. It is almost needless to say that neither gun nor game licences are required.

The Game-law now in force in the adjoining Territory of Dakota is much more stringent. It prohibits the killing of prairie chickens or grouse between Jan. 1 and Sept. 1; the killing of geese, duck, snipe, curlew or plover between May 15 and Sept. 14; the killing of more than twenty-four of any one kind in a day by any person; the shipping of any out of the territory, or more than a dozen to any one in the territory, and these not for sale; and the shooting of birds for traffic. No storekeeper is allowed to have in his possession more than 25 of one kind at a time.

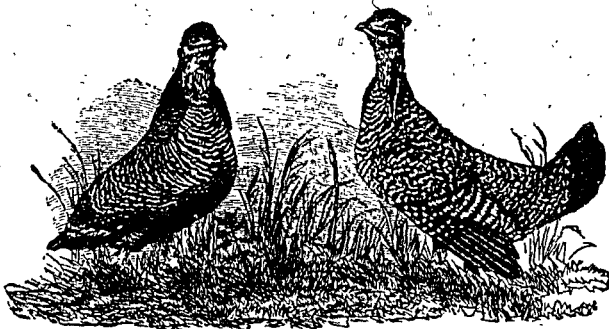
Sportsmen who desire to have any of their Manitoban trophies preserved, cannot do better than send them to Mr. Hine, taxidermist, of Main Street, Winnipeg, who is an excellent workman in all the different branches of his trade. Most of the Deers!

heads and stuffed birds forming the magnificent "Game Trophy," which attracted so much attention at the Colonial Exhibition in 1886, were prepared by him. Mr. Hine is now, I believe, the only professed taxidermist nearer than Chicago, a thousand miles distant, though there used to be a man at Saint Paul.

With these general remarks as to sport in Manitoba, I will proceed to speak of the principal game-animals and birds from time to time to be met with. Among these the Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Pedioacetes phasianellus*), invariably called the "Prairie Chicken," is above all others the chief game bird of the country, and deserves first mention. It is in all respects an ideal game bird, and is abundant in all the more or less open parts of the province, wherever a more or less dry and sandy soil has a rough and hilly surface, covered thinly with scattered bluffs of poplar or willow. They seem especially fond of frequenting the neighbourhood of the "trails" or roads crossing the prairie, and it is no uncommon thing for settlers and others to shoot them from the seat of a buckboard when driving along. It is a very free breeder, often laying as many as twelve or thirteen eggs in a clutch; it does not shun civilization, nor does it in any way seem driven back by cultivation; as a table bird it is not surpassed by any species of grouse; while as a game bird it is equally desirable, affording excellent shooting as the birds go whirring upwards one after another, with a very strong and rapid flight, on all sides of the sportsman who has been fortunate enough to walk into the middle of a covey. This, however, only takes place in the early autumn, just after the season has commenced, or in very thinly-settled districts; for, in places where the birds are much shot at, and late in the season, they become wild, and afford fine long-range shooting. A full-grown bird weighs from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{3}{4}$ pounds. There are (as my friend Mr. Ernest E. Thompson, who has largely studied its habits, observes) many most interesting points in its natural history, especially fitting it for life in the country of which it is one of the most characteristic species. Its legs, as in all the grouse, are feathered down to the toes, which are pectinated or furnished with rows of bristles on each side. These bristles begin to grow on both old and young birds about the middle of August, and are fully grown by the end of October. During the following winter months they remain on the bird, and there can be little or no doubt that they serve in all respects the purposes of snow-shoes, enabling the bird to walk with ease upon the surface of the fine soft snow. They drop off, one by one, on the first return of warm weather. During summer the "chickens" are widely spread over the open prairie, and they then seldom perch on trees; but in winter they retire to the dense bush, and perch freely. At night they dive headlong into a snowdrift, and there spend the night, warmly ensconced a foot or so beneath its surface. In this position, however, they are much exposed to the attacks of wolves and foxes, to which predacious animals many fall victims; while a fall of sleet often causes the surface of the drift to become hard frozen, imprisoning the wretched chickens, which are seen no more till the general spring thaw leaves exposed their dead bodies, reduced by starvation to little more than skin, bone, and feathers. As regards food, the Prairie Chicken is almost wholly omnivorous, feeding freely at different times of the year on grass, buds of the birch and willow, berries, grasshoppers, the flowers of the wild anemone or sandflower (*Anemone patens*), the hips of the wild rose, &c., &c. One of the most interesting points in the natural history of the species is its assembling in numbers during the pairing season on small hillocks, when a very grotesque performance, known as the "dance," is gone through. At these times the Indians take many of them by means of snares, for the birds become so excited that they seem quite heedless of a companion struggling in a noose. The tail feathers are exceedingly stiff, and the bird is able to make a very curious noise by vibrating them together when at the "dance," or when

dying after being shot. Much further information about the species is to be found in a paper by Mr. E. E. Thompson, in the Proceedings of the Canadian Institute for 1883 (Vol. I. No. 5).

Next to the prairie chicken, the Pinnated Grouse, or Prairie Hen (*Cupidonia cupido*), deserves mention. It is not as yet by any means a common species; but is rapidly becoming more so. It is an American, rather than a Canadian bird, and has for many



PRAIRIE HEN.

years been extending its range westward and north-westward with the advance of cultivation. It is only within the last few years that it has appeared at all in Manitoba. In 1872, Dr. Elliott Coues, the eminent American ornithologist, wrote that he had no reason to believe that it had then ever occurred in the northern portion of either Dakota or Minnesota, immediately to the south of Manitoba. Before 1883, when it began to be common at Pembina, on the United States boundary, it was almost unknown in the province. In 1884, however, it had become not uncommon at Winnipeg, and had also occurred at Portage-la-Prairie, fifty miles west. Since then it has become increasingly common, although I have not yet shot it myself. It is in every way a most excellent game and table bird, rivalling in all respects the Prairie Chicken above described. Another bird of the same class, is the Spruce Partridge or Canada grouse (*Dendragapus canadensis*), which is frequent in the woods, especially northward. It is an absurdly tame and fearless bird, especially when it has eggs or young. Manitobans often amuse themselves by shooting it with the rifle—the common weapon of the country. Considerable skill is required to cut the head neatly off with the rifle ball as the bird sits perched upon a log, without injuring the body. The Willow Ptarmigan (*Lagopus lagopus*), is a very abundant winter visitor to the shores of Lake Manitoba, Lake Winnipeg, and other northerly localities.

Following the grouse, the ducks demand attention—indeed, although less essentially game birds than the foregoing, they ought perhaps to have been treated first, as the amount of sport obtainable in Manitoba with them is much greater than with the grouse. Not a few species breed more or less abundantly among the lakes, swamps, and bluffs throughout the province. Among these, the commonest is our old familiar English friend the Mallard (*Anas boschas*), as well-known in Manitoba as it is here. It arrives about the middle of April and departs late in October, being quite the commonest species of duck breeding in the province. Other abundant summer visitors, breeding freely in the country, are the Blue-winged teal (*Anas discors*), and the Green-winged teal (*Anas carolinensis*), both abundant summer visitors, arriving late in April, and departing again southward early in October; the Bald-pate (*Anas americana*), the Gadwall (*Chaulelasmus streperus*), the Shoveller (*Spatula clypeata*), a common summer visitor, arriving late in April, breeding abundantly in many parts of the province, and departing again late in October, the Pintail (*Dasila acuta*), a common summer visitor,

the Blue-bill (*Fuligula marila*), and many others. The far-famed Canvas-back Duck (*Fuligula valisneria*) also breeds in the province, though not commonly. There is, indeed, scarcely a lake, pond, or "sleugh" (as shallow swampy ponds on the prairie are called) in any part of the province that is not found to be tenanted as the summer advances by a more or less numerous brood of plump young ducklings. But for this, many a traveller would often have (as I have had) to go supperless to bed.

But the number of ducks that remain in, or come to, the province to breed, is as nothing compared with the number of those which visit it in spring and autumn. At these seasons the numbers that arrive are so vast that no description is able to give any adequate idea of their abundance. It is a common thing to be told that such and such a lake has been "black with ducks" on some particular day, and I can personally testify that this expression may fairly be employed to describe their numbers. In the spring the flocks are, of course, moving northwards to their lonely breeding grounds, spread over the vast extent of territory lying between Manitoba and the Arctic Ocean, which are still often known as the "Fur Countries." On their passage northward, both those ducks which breed in the province and those which go on further, usually appear in Manitoba during the month of April: consequently a certain amount of sport may, in most years, be enjoyed with them before the commencement of the close time on May 1. In the autumn they are returning again with their numbers largely increased by the young birds of the year, and passing southwards to winter in the Southern States or the Gulf of Florida. The largest numbers appear in the months of September and October, when all the innumerable little lakes, ponds, and swamps which so abound on the prairie in some parts of the province, literally teem with millions of ducks, belonging to over a score of different species. At these times of passage southwards, the sport to be had among them is almost unequalled, and most Manitobans contrive to take advantage of it. Gunners are out in all directions; and the luckless ducks, though tame enough at first, soon become very shy and wary.

As further evidence of the extraordinary profusion of ducks in Manitoba in the autumn, I may quote the words of a writer in the "*Field*," descriptive of a day's sport, near the Souris River, in Southern Manitoba, in September, 1882. He says:—"One day, M., K., & I, started out, with Mrs. S. to drive and hold the horses while we shot. On arriving at the low land we separated, walking about a quarter of a mile apart. Anything like the quantity of wild fowl, I never saw before. Those which were put up at one "sleugh" merely flew across to another, so that a constant fusillade was kept up, and our fair charioteer was busily employed driving from one gun to the other and collecting the birds. K. shot a Sandhill Crane, and M. and I each got a Goose out of a flock of seven that rose between us. We brought back besides, 117 ducks, of no less than nine different kinds." Two days earlier this same writer had, in one afternoon, bagged no less than thirty-eight ducks, eight chickens, and some snipe, to his own gun.

Here is another and similar extract from the remarks of a writer signing himself "Cherry Brandy," whose interesting article in the "*Field*" for April 5th, 1884, gives a very fair idea both of the amount and of the kind of rough sport to be obtained in many parts of Manitoba at the right season of the year. Writing of his experiences at some ponds near Moosomin, on the western boundary of the province, early in September, he says:—"Up rose the mallard at once, but the next instant to the discharge of my barrels, four of their number returned to the water. Re-loading immediately I let drive again, and several birds came tumbling down from the vast cloud of ducks which almost shut out the sky. The air was simply thick with them. The mallards and other large duck made off at once, but the teal and other smaller varieties kept 'fooling around.'

Now it was a large flock; now two or three; again a single bird. For sometime matters were uncommonly lively for both myself and the dog, and the latter had a little more than he could do. My barrels, too, were getting uncomfortably warm, but the hottest part of the performance was over. I then went to the dog's assistance and soon there was a goodly pile of birds landed—mallards, pintails, grey and black ducks, shovellers, and teal. Any amount of crippled birds must have escaped, as the dog had quite enough to do attending to the dead and dying. Tying these birds together, I started to beat the sloughs for any loitering duck or snipe. I had now by far the pleasantest shooting, occasionally picking up a snipe or two. These were numerous and lay well, and all that was necessary to flush them was to walk along the soft edges of the ponds and through the half-dried sloughs. I confined my attention principally to the snipe, as my bag was beginning to feel uncomfortably heavy. I, however, got a few ducks and a teal now and then, also a few bittern and chicken. A little after 4 p.m., I arrived at my tent."

Among the best places to obtain good duck-shooting in the autumn are Totogon, at the south end of Lake Manitoba, twenty-five miles north-west from Portage-la-Prairie and easily reached by stage from that place, or from Westbourne station, ten miles distant, on the Manitoba and North-Western Railway; the large marsh around the mouth of the

Red River at the southern end of Lake Winnipeg; Long Lake, close to Raeburn station, and Oak Lake, near the station of the same name, both on the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and respectively 35 and 165 miles west of Winnipeg; Headingly Marsh, English Lake, Oak Point, on the east side of Lake Manitoba; Shoal Lake, 50 miles north-west from Winnipeg, and easily reached from Stonewall Station; and the country around Rapid City and Minnedosa, the prairie being everywhere dotted with lakes and ponds around those places. These are, perhaps, the best spots, but excellent sport is to be had in almost every part of the province at the right time of year. The marshes round the mouth of the Red River may be reached by canoe from Winnipeg or Selkirk.



CANOE PARTY DESCENDING THE RED RIVER.

Two species of goose, at least, are also abundant during the periods of spring and autumn migration. Of these, the Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*) is the most numerous, and the most important from the sportsman's point of view. It arrives in vast flocks, which feed in stubble fields and open parts of the prairie. April and October are the months in which it is met with. Its breeding grounds are supposed to be around James' Bay, but a few probably breed in Manitoba, as I have seen them in pairs on lakes in the north-western part of the province in the beginning of May. The other species is the Snow Goose (*Anser hyperboreus*), commonly known as the "Wavey." This also appears in enormous flocks, especially in spring, when it does much damage from its habits of feeding in the grain fields, and is in consequence unprotected by the

local Game Act. It arrives during the first half of May, and again in October. I have sometimes seen what may be fairly described as "acres of waveys" on the prairie, but they are naturally very wary and difficult of approach, though settlers sometimes kill them with rifles.



SHOOTING WILD GEESE IN MANITOBA.

Two or three other less common species of Wild Goose appear when on migration, as well as a couple of species of swan, but these latter breed far in the north, in the vicinity of Hudson's Bay.

The Hooded Merganser (*Mergus cucullatus*), one of our rarest English birds, is not a very uncommon visitor. I have seen its nest in hollow trees.

On some of the larger lakes there are considerable breeding colonies of the Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*). One such is on a low, small, reedy island, about a quarter of an acre in extent, and known as "Pelican Island," in the middle of Shoal Lake. Here hundreds of pelicans nest in very close proximity, and the stench arising from their excrement and the portions of decaying fish which they strew around is almost intolerable. On the same lake there is, at least, one island breeding station of the double-crested Cormorant (*Graculus dilophus*). Both these interesting localities may be easily visited by arrangement with Mr. F. W. Robertson, an English gentleman, who has erected an hotel, and started a small steam launch on the lake for the convenience of visitors. Those going there should make previous arrangement by letter, in order that they may be met, either by the bi-weekly stage, or by Mr. Robertson's own "rigs," at Stonewall station, twenty-five miles distant.

Sport may sometimes be had with the Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis*), but these are so exceedingly wary that they can seldom be killed without a rifle. They are com-

mon summer visitors, arriving in small parties, or even (as I have once known) in a considerable flock, but they soon afterwards break up into pairs. No one who has heard the intensely sonorous, far-sounding "cr-runk" of these birds, as they pass overhead at an immense height, can ever forget it.

This bird is a breeder on the open prairie in marshy places. It arrives about April 21st, and departs for the south late in August. The Whooping Crane (*Grus americanus*) is another summer migrant, but less common than the foregoing. It is said to breed in some parts of the province, but I do not know this from personal observation. It has, if possible, an even more sonorous note than the last. The American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*), a bird which occasionally occurs in England, is an abundant summer visitor to most parts of the province, arriving about the middle of May and leaving again late in October. It frequents large beds of reeds on the edges of lakes and marshy places generally; but it is so easily shot on account of its tameness, slow-flight and large wings, that killing it is not a sport. Beside the foregoing species of birds, there are various small waders, especially the Greater and Lesser Yellow-shanks (*Totanus melanoleucus* and *flavipes*), which are generally classed together as "snipe," and are abundant round the edges of lakes and sleughs during the season's migration, especially the first half of August, when they afford good shooting. Among other wading-birds, common along the rivers and on the edges of lakes, either during summer or the period of autumn migration, are the Killdeer Plover (*Egialitis vocifera*), Wilson's Snipe (*Gallinago wilsoni*), the Knot (*Tringa canutus*), &c., &c. These all afford both good sport and good food. In most open parts of the prairie, too, Bartram's Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*), a species which has occurred (though rarely) in England, is abundant, and is nearly always known as the "quail." It is an excellent table-bird, and is often shot by gunners, but its nature is so fearless and confiding that the shooting of it cannot be called sport. Its long-drawn, mellow whistle is one of the most familiar and melodious natural sounds heard on the prairies. For a sandpiper, its habits are most erratic. It seldom goes near water, but lives entirely upon the high dry prairie, and I have frequently seen it perch on trees. It is a summer visitor, arriving about the 7th of May, and departing again about the end of August.

On the whole, the variety of winged game to be met with in the province of Manitoba, may fairly be described as very great. No less than two species of Swan, four of Goose, twenty-one of Duck, two of Crane, thirty-four of "Snipe," five of Grouse, and two of wild Pigeon may be met with in the province.

Turning now to four-legged game, it must be noted that the Buffalo, once the king of all the game animals of the North-West, has now been extinct in the province, in a wild state, for many years.

In 1818, a large herd was met with, within what are now the boundaries of the city of Winnipeg. On this occasion, a party of travellers stood for an hour in the midst of a black moving mass, with difficulty preventing themselves, by the constant discharge of fire-arms, from being trampled to death. Up to 1857, small herds were to be met with around Turtle Mountain, the Blue Hills of the Souris, Fort Ellice and other places on what is now the western boundary of Manitoba. At all these spots, and many others, I have often seen the prairie pitted with their old wallows, and crossed in all directions by their old paths cut deep into the turf, while the edges of all the sleughs and ponds are seamed with tracks made by the feet of countless buffaloes as they went down to drink, year after year, for centuries, and their bleaching skulls and marrow-bones abound in all directions. It may, however, be now stated with safety, that for the last twenty years, or even more, no such thing as a live wild buffalo has ever been seen within the

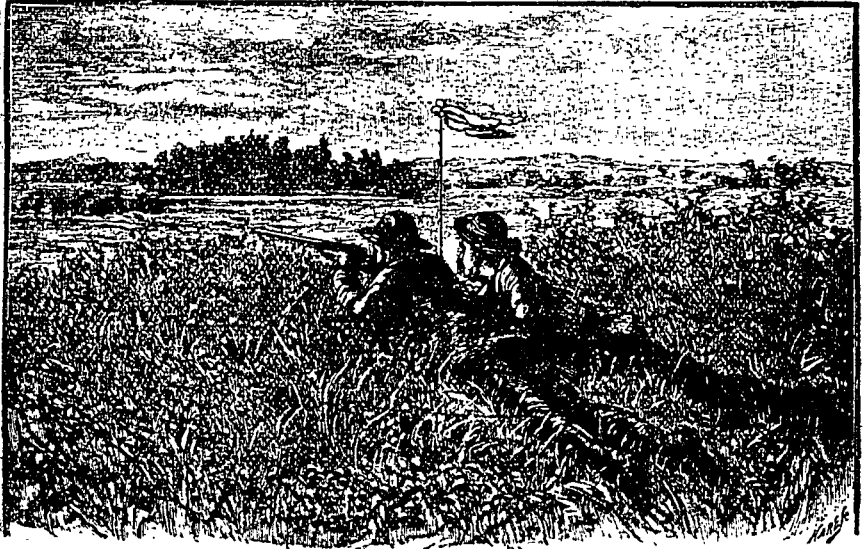
boundaries of the province. In the North-West Territories, however, a few small herds still exist in the neighbourhood of the Peace River; and it is also practically certain that, with the exception of a few animals which still linger in and around the Yellowstone Park, these are the only wild buffalo now remaining on the American continent.

In Manitoba the buffalo is now represented only by the splendid domesticated herd belonging to Major S. L. Bedson, warden of the Manitoba Penitentiary at Stony Mountain, about thirteen miles north of Winnipeg. Nothing in the Province is more worthy of a visit from the stranger than this herd, which is unquestionably the finest in existence, though there are others in the State. The history of the herd is as follows:—In 1878, some Indians returning to Fort Garry (now Winnipeg), from the west brought with them five buffalo calves. These were for some time allowed to run at large on the outskirts of the village. By 1882, when they had for some time been in the possession of their present owner, the original five (only one of which appears to have been a bull) had increased to twenty-three, including four added by purchase. In January, 1885, the herd had increased to forty-one animals, twenty-six being pure buffaloes, and the rest hybrids with domestic cattle, for Major Bedson finds the two inter-breed freely. The increase went rapidly on until, in March last (1888), Major Bedson reported to me that his unique herd then numbered sixty-six head, consisting of twenty-three pure-bred bulls, and thirty-five cows, with eight hybrids. Since March—that is during last summer—no less than seventeen calves have been added to the herd, bringing the total up to eighty-three animals. Nor does this number include some twenty-three more which, since 1879, have been either given away, butchered for food, maliciously shot or otherwise disposed off. The herd is never housed or fed at any time of the year, but remains on the open unenclosed prairie round their owner's house, and receives no attention whatever beyond what is needed to prevent the animals from wandering away. Yet disease has never been known to attack the herd. The most interesting fact in connection with the natural history of the Buffalo that has been elicited by Major Bedson's experiments in hybridization is that not only will the Buffalo and the Domestic Cattle breed freely together, but that their off-spring are also fertile among themselves. Certainly no one visiting Winnipeg should leave without first paying a visit to Major Bedson's most interesting herd. The sight of a large herd of shaggy buffaloes of all ages, sizes and sexes, slowly munching the short brown prairie grasses, in quiet and contentment, within an easy morning's ride of a large and populous city, is enough to call to the mind stirring memories of the condition of the "Wild West" in years when the buffalo was still abundant, and not, as now, on the verge of extinction in a wild state.

The Antelope, too, is now practically, if not quite, extinct in Manitoba. It was last met with on the Souris Plains, where, however, it is quite possible that it may be occasionally met with again, as it is not yet exterminated on the vast and solitary plains lying immediately to the south, across the International Boundary, in the Territories of Dakota and Montana. The annexed cut shows the method which was usually adopted when shooting them. A handkerchief or a piece of rag fastened to the end of a stick or the ramrod of a gun was waved in the air by a sportsman, who himself remained concealed. The animals, impelled by an irresistible curiosity which they are well-known to possess, then approach within range. In the north-west Territories it still occurs in places.

The Caribou (*Rangifer caribou*), the American representative of our Reindeer, occurs not very uncommonly in the province, but is not an animal the ordinary settler is ever likely to meet with, as it is confined to the rocky, forest-covered region to the north and west. In the regions around the Lake of the Woods and between Lake

Winnipeg and Lake Manitoba, it occurs not uncommonly. It has more than once been proposed to introduce the European Reindeer, as a beast of draught, into Canada, where the Caribou has never been used as such, but these proposals have never been carried out. The Caribou is an animal of great value to the Indian and the hunter, as every part of its body is of use after death. The meat is very good food, when fat; the hide makes excellent leather; and the sinews make the best of thread.



SHOOTING ANTELOPE ON THE PLAINS.

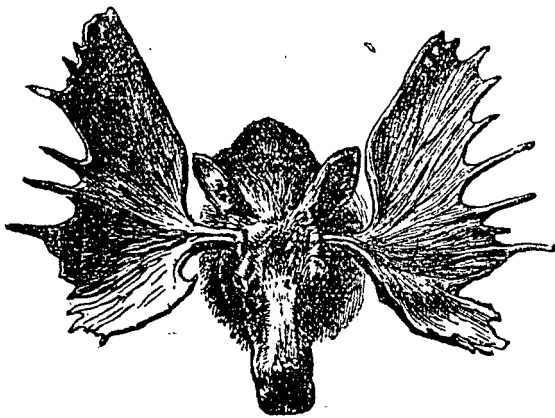
Of the deer, the commonest species is the Mule or Jumping Deer (*Cariacus macrotis*). Is still by no means rare in the drier parts of the country, inhabiting places where there are numerous small woods and bluffs, but seldom venturing out on to the open prairie. The "still hunt" is the method usually employed for killing them, but they are sometimes run with hounds.

It is chiefly met with in the valleys of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers. East of the latter and north of the southern boundaries of the larger lakes, I believe it is not met with. Among the desolate and barren sandhills, thinly covered with small scrub, which occupy a very large region north of the Assiniboine River, between Portage-la-Prairie and Brandon, I have often seen their tracks, and it must be quite common there. The Jumping Deer is a larger and heavier animal than the Virginian Deer, and is further distinguishable by its short black-tipped tail and very large ears. It derives one of its common names from its extremely curious method of proceeding when running fast. Its progression is then accomplished by a series of quick jumps or bounds, the body and limbs being kept rigidly set and the impetus given apparently by a short sharp motion of the feet alone. From five to eight yards are cleared at each bound. The other of its common names is derived from the mule-like size of its ears.

The Virginian Deer (*Cervus virginianus*), though occasionally met with in the dense woods on the Pembina Mountain, is decidedly uncommon. It may be distinguished from the Jumping Deer by its smaller size, smaller ears, and by its long tail which is about 14 inches in length, and pure white underneath. The animal usually holds up its tail, showing the white below, when bounding away in alarm, whence comes one of its common names—that of White-tailed Deer. Its average weight is probably a little over 100 lbs. One sportsman of my acquaintance has shot seven within the last four years.

The Elk or Wapiti (*Cervus canadensis*) must once have been quite abundant, judging from the number of its antlers one finds strewn about the prairie and in the bluffs. In places they are only less numerous than the horns of the buffalo. It is now nowhere at all common, except in the thickly wooded districts on and around the Pembina, Moose, Duck, and Riding Mountains, though still of not infrequent occurrence in many of the more wooded parts of the province, as, for instance, between Lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba, and West of Lake Manitoba, while up to the last year or two, a few small bands still roamed over the wide expanse of sandhills between Portage-la-Prairie and Brandon. In the winter of 1886-87, a well-known half-breed hunter killed no less than seventeen before the middle of December, in the thick woods covering the Tiger Hills. The Wapiti is a magnificent animal; a full-grown buck usually standing from 4½ to 5 feet in height at the shoulders, and weighing from 500 to 600 pounds. The female is somewhat smaller, but still a fine beast. The antlers are probably larger than those of any other living species of deer. They are branched like those of our British Red Deer. Mr. Hine has usually some magnificent heads in his warehouse. It is almost omnivorous, living, and even fattening, among bleak sandhills where most other animals would starve.

The Moose (*Alce americanus*), by far the finest of all American deer, is still widely distributed wherever the nature of the country is congenial to its habits, and may even be described as plentiful on the Duck, Moose, and Riding Mountains, and in the low-lying country around Lakes Manitoba and Winnipeg. It usually frequents lowlands, where dense woodland is interspersed with swamps and with thickets of birch and willow. The almost invariable method of pursuing it is "still hunting," or tracking, but the greatest skill and caution are needed, as the Moose is wary in the extreme. Its flesh, which is excellent eating, is a staple article of diet with the Hudson's



HEAD OF MOOSE.*

Bay Company's servants and others throughout the North-West Territories, while the best leather for moccasins is that made from its hide. The adult male is an enormous animal,

* I am indebted to the Proprietor of the "Field" for the kind loan of this woodcut.

generally standing six feet high at the shoulders, and sometimes more. In height, therefore, the Moose equals a large horse, while specimens are occasionally killed weighing between 1100 and 1200 pounds. Nevertheless the average size is nearer 800 or 900 pounds. Although the Moose lacks the graceful shape and the easy motions of most other members of the deer-tribe, it is by no means a helpless creature, and is in all respects well fitted to take care of itself, except when deep snow is covered with a hard crust through which it breaks. At such times the hunter has the poor beast almost at his mercy; but at other times all his skill and cunning are needed to outwit its habitually wary nature. Mr. Cummings, of Winnipeg, has a very large head, the antlers of which measure 57 inches from tip to tip. Moose have occasionally been broken in to harness.

The intending emigrant should not form flighty ideas as to the opportunities he will enjoy of hunting and killing deer. The picturesque "hunting scene" one meets with in the pamphlets of emigration agencies are in no way calculated to give a false impression, but they are not of everyday occurrence. Nevertheless, there is no time of the winter when a settler living near their haunts may not expect to meet with one or other of the above-mentioned species of deer. It is much the same with bears, which are still quite plentiful in nearly all broken and thickly wooded parts of the province, though very seldom seen except by sportsmen who go out specially to find them, as they are extremely shy and ever on the alert. The ordinary settler does not often come across one. It is almost needless to say that, so far as man is concerned, they are quite harmless, except when wounded. I have hunted but have never killed a bear.

Of rabbits, the sportsman may expect at any time to meet with one or other of the two species which inhabit the province. The largest and by far the least common, is the Prairie Hare (*Lepus campestris*), a large animal weighing over 8lb. It is met with on the open prairie, but is nowhere abundant. The other and much commoner species is the Varying Hare (*L. americanus*), commonly called the "rabbit," which is met with in wooded districts throughout the province. In October it becomes perfectly white. The most interesting fact in connection with it is the extraordinary variability in its numbers at different times. As a rule, it is not a particularly abundant species, but at other times it increases and becomes so astonishingly numerous as to be by far the most abundant mammal. When its increase has reached a certain point, a kind of epidemic disease appears, and the creatures then die off by thousands. Their dead bodies are then to be found lying about in all directions, and in the following year scarcely one is to be met with. In the years of its abundance it becomes so incredibly numerous that shooting them almost ceases to be a sport. Rabbits are not now protected under the local Game Act, on account of the damage they do when numerous.

There are various other animals, more or less common, in the province, such as the Badger (*Taxidea americana*), the Skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), the Fox (*Vulpes fulvus*), and the Coyoté, or Prairie Wolf (*Canis latrans*), which, though not regular game animals, will often at odd times afford considerable sport in their pursuit. He who pursues a skunk, however, has need to pay heed to himself. In the winter times, when the snow lies deep upon the ground, the hungry Coyotés, which are numerous in all wooded districts, though quite harmless to human beings, often assemble round the settler's shanty, in the hope of being able to pick up something eatable. They then afford excellent marks for a clever rifle-shot.

Speaking of Foxes and Coyotes, both of which (as I have said) are plentiful in the province, reminds me that the sport-loving Briton, who has been used long and ardently to follow the hounds at home, is no longer under the necessity of relinquishing his favourite pursuit on changing the scene of his labours from England to Manitoba. At least one regularly-constituted pack of foxhounds, known as the "Saskatchewan Hunt" is now in existence in the province, the kennels being at Rapid City. The history of the hunt is, briefly, as follows: Some time since, Mr. J. G. Williamson, a gentleman, residing at Moosomin, got together a few hounds, and he and his friends were accustomed to hunt foxes and coyotes in that district. In the course of time, however, the hounds were sold to Mr. Munn of Rapid City, and good sport was afterwards had with them round that place. In the end of August 1887, the pack received an important addition in the shape of a number of undeniably well-bred hounds, originally drawn from the Blankney and Badminton packs, which were purchased by Mr. Munn in British Columbia from a former governor of that province. Since then some remarkably good runs have been enjoyed with the pack, which now amounts to ten or twelve couple.

At Brandon, too, in July of last year, a number of English settlers and others who had been accustomed to enjoy the sport of foxhunting at home, met together with the object of forming a hunt club for that district. Some hounds were immediately after purchased, and it was decided at once to commence operations, so that by this time it may be presumed the hunt has been got into a more or less complete working order.

There can be no question that many parts of Manitoba are admirably suited to the sport of foxhunting. Some districts are certainly too wet and swampy, whilst others are far too thickly wooded but there are many other districts where a rolling prairie, extending mile after mile, is interspersed here and there with small "bluffs" of poplar, which is as good a hunting country as any in the world—barring the lack of jumps and the difficulties which may be expected at times from the abominable barb-wire fencing, so common in the Province.

Here are a couple of accounts of runs enjoyed round Rapid City with the Saskatchewan Hounds. The first, clipped from a Manitoban paper, reads rather as though it were the contribution of a native Canadian journalist who had never before chronicled a "run" and was not very sure of the correctness of his sporting terms; but the second, which was contributed to a recent number of the *Field*, is evidently from the pen of a true British sportsman who has enjoyed many a rattling day with the hounds in what he, like all colonial settlers, would speak of as "the Old Country." His style has about it the true ring of an enthusiastic fox-hunter; and it must be confessed that, if many days like that described are obtained by the members of the Saskatchewan Hunt, their doings will be worthy of being chronicled in the pages of the *Field*, side by side with those of our crack English packs.

"RAPID CITY, APRIL 23RD, 1887.

"On Friday morning, according to announcement, Mr. Munn's fox-hounds were at Major Douglass' Farm near Rapid City, and with them quite a number from the vicinity of the "Orphans Home." The party was swelled by the sports of Rapid City and vicinity, all well mounted and anxious for the sport. There were also quite a number of spectators in democrats and buggies who went out to the "meet" to see the send off; and they followed the hunt for miles by cutting corners until the pace

became too fast for them. The most of the prairie having been burnt over last fall made it very difficult for the hounds to keep the scent, but when they struck a place where the grass was long the riders had to go at a pace that astonished them, in order to keep up. The morning was cold and frosty with gusts of snow falling, and not a good day for the dogs, but notwithstanding both dogs and huntsmen deserve credit for the first class sport given to the hunters present. Over twenty riders started out to follow the hounds, three of the number being ladies, two Miss Hurds and Miss Whellans, all of whom kept well to the front and were in at the finish. There was not a mishap during the entire run, neither horse or rider going down, although ploughed land, badger and fox holes innumerable were jumped, and bluffs galloped through at full speed. Mr. Munn acted as huntsman, and Mr. Hurd as whipper-in. After a short skirmish among the bluffs and knolls a fox was started, and a very sharp run of about two miles took place, when burnt ground was reached, and the fox went to ground and was lost. In a short time another fox was started, and a splendid run of ten or twelve miles took place, with only a few checks by the fox hiding in small thick patches of brush and lying down close until the hounds hunted him out. The last piece of clear ground the fox ran over, the hounds were within a few feet of him; but fortunately for him he found a hole, and saved his brush. This ended the first fox hunt at Rapid City, all being satisfied, even the horses and dogs having had enough of it. We hope Mr. Munn will favour us with a few more runs this summer, when the surroundings are more favorable, and we promise him a larger turn out next time, and a warmer reception."

"On October 4th we met at the house of Mr. Heard, and to say that five out of a family of seven, including, I need hardly say, Mr. Heard himself, are as regularly out as are the hounds themselves, is saying that it was the residence of a good old sportsman. A nip of "Scotch" to keep out the cold, for it was a keen, frosty morning, and we were moving to where a wolf was reported as having been seen the previous evening. Thanks to the seductive vicinity of a dead horse, we found he had waited for us, and hounds had hardly been thrown off before all doubts were set at rest by the joyful "twang, twang" of the master's horn as he laid them on to a view across a wide ravine. So quickly had the hounds been got together that, by the time pipes had been slipped away and hats set firmly on, we could only see a back view of the master as he dived into a thick piece of willow scrub, and, hurrying up, saw the hounds some quarter of mile ahead of us, racing across a piece of open, undulating country. Diving into a bluff on the far side of this, a sudden turn to the right gave us a chance to get on better terms with them, and as we came up to where hounds were working through some thick scrub, on looking round we found that three out of a field of thirteen had already "lost the number of their mess" for the time being, one at least having a badger hole to thank for his absence. A few more minutes' steady hunting, and the sound of the horn once more sets us galloping again, when, leaving the scrub as abruptly as we had struck it, we saw a beautiful panorama spread out before us. Away across a piece of gently undulating prairie, dotted hither and thither by picturesque knolls and bluffs, the hounds were racing along, close enough to be covered by a sheet, and as their music was borne back to our ears by the breeze, and the hollow thunder of a dozen horses, laid out to their utmost, sounded around us, I for one felt as if the gulf between this and "twenty minutes o'er the grass without a check, boys," at home, was not so very wide after all. The scent must indeed have been breast-high that frosty morning, as for close on fifteen minutes every horse was galloping his utmost to live with the hounds, and but for a timely piece of plough, which

brought them to their noses, it would have been "bellows to mend" with not a few of us soon. Crossing from corner to corner of a fifty-acre field, we ran within a stone's throw of the astonished-owner's house, and a little further on encountered a considerable obstacle for pumped horses, a rail fence some 1ft. high, and strong enough to stand a cavalry charge. Hounds were over, however; so there was nothing for it but for us to follow, and most of us found ourselves—somehow—on the right side with the hounds. The top rail off made the exit somewhat easier, and, surmounting a slight hill a little further on, we got a bird's-eye view of the country before and behind. Down the other side, and across a ravine, with a watercourse at the bottom that we plunged through or jumped, we went helter-skelter; and, oh, joy! the wolf jumps up out of the long grass in full sight of the straining pack. About five minutes up the other side of the ravine, with the wolf not a hundred yards from the hounds, and they were into him; and never more welcome did who-whoop sound to my ears as I sprang off my panting horse and mopped the perspiration from my forehead."

After Miss Heard's bridle had been decorated with a well-won brush, and other trophies in the shape of pads and mask distributed around, we jogged home; and the opinion of a sporting Canadian farmer who turned up in time to see the worry, pretty well summarised that of us all, that "it wur a pretty slick wolf, but them dogs wur a derned sight slicker, let me tell you, boys.—HAL."

Of the fishing obtainable in the province I am hardly competent to speak, as I am no fisherman; but fish are certainly very abundant in both rivers and lakes. In the

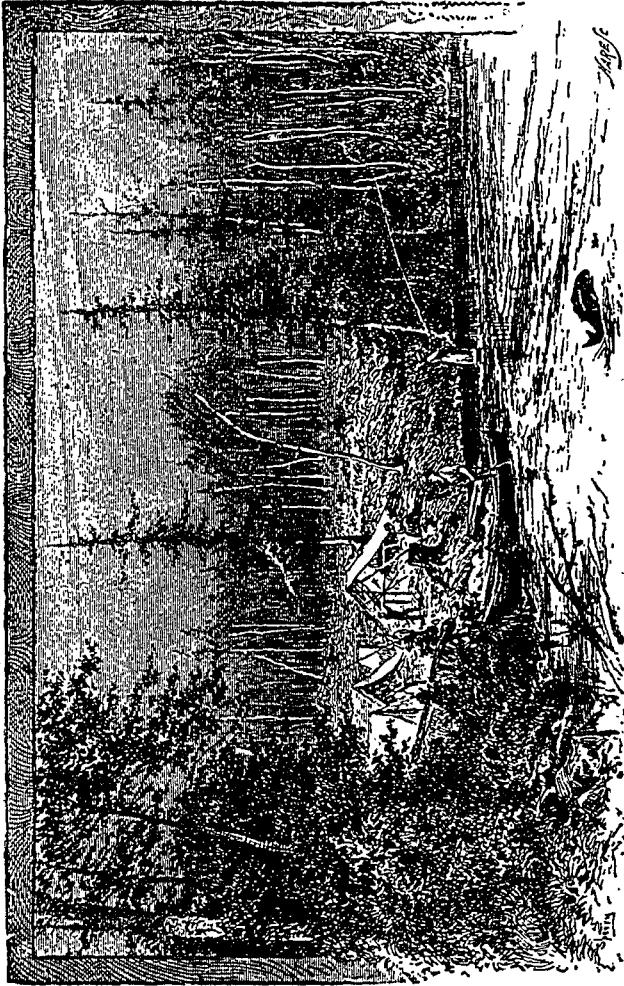


former, gold eyes, bass, catfish, and pickerel are met with, while in all the larger lakes there is an abundance—white-fish, salmon, trout, pike, perch, sturgeon, &c. Very good fishing, probably the best in the Province, is to be obtained in the rocky, forest-covered region covering the eastern half of Manitoba—a region differing almost as much from the level open prairie country met with in the western half of the Province as sea does from land. In crossing this wild region, which is still almost uninhabited and trackless, it is necessary to travel with birch-bark canoes, manned by Indians or hardy half-bred *voyageurs*, in the fashion so well described by Ballantyne, Mayne Reid, and many other writers. Here "running rapids" and "making portages" may still be indulged, exactly as of yore, to one's heart's content.

A MORNING'S CATCH.

With this I must bring my observations to a close. Not only Manitoba, but the whole of the great Canadian North-West, has hitherto been most undeservedly neglected by English sportsmen. The very recent date at which adequate railway communication with this vast region was opened up, of course accounts for much of this

neglect, but not for all; and so perfect, cheap, and convenient have the means of reaching it by the Canadian Pacific Railway now become, that it is certain that the magnificent advantages offered by the Canadian North-West as a sporting country will

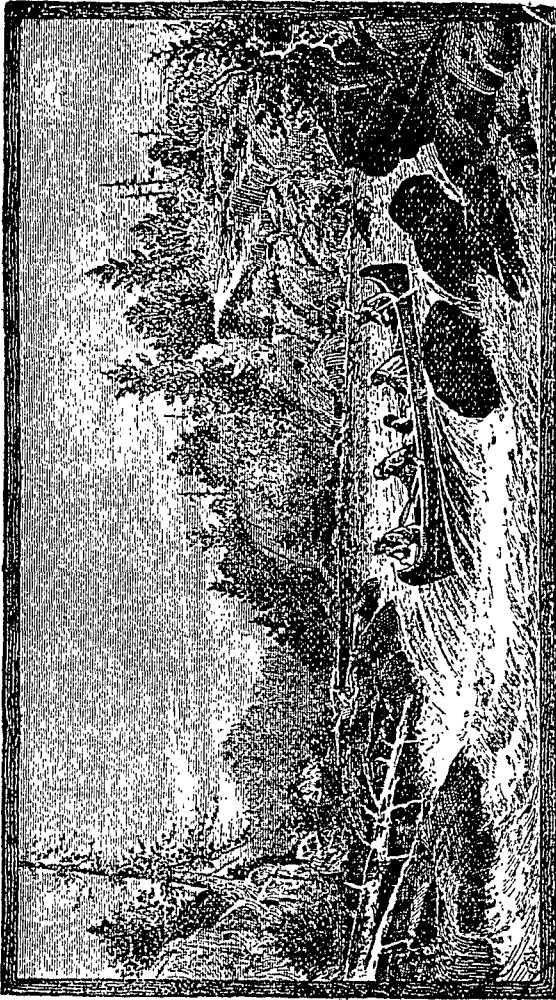


A HUNTER'S CAMP IN THE FORESTS OF EASTERN MANITOBA.

not remain much longer unknown to English sportsmen. The chief sporting grounds of the United States are now rapidly becoming exhausted, and the larger game greatly diminished in number, but in the Canadian North-West will be found yet another United States in reserve, so far as the sportsman is concerned.

It is no exaggeration to say that, if visited at the right time of year, Manitoba and the vast country beyond it will be found a veritable sportsman's paradise in which great abundance and variety of game, together with health and recreation, may be found by

those who seek them, at ridiculously small expense. As regards climate, too, there is every inducement; for, whatever may be said against the climate of Manitoba during the winter, it cannot be denied that the summer and early autumn in that country are most enjoyable seasons. By the end of August, at latest, the mosquitoes, which are so intolerable during the hot weather, have quite disappeared.



RUNNING THE RAPIDS.

Winnipeg, which all sportsmen should make their head-quarters is within an easy fifteen-days run of London, and the journey there and back can be accomplished sumptuously on £60. Anyone, therefore, with the sum of £100 or £120, and a couple of months to spare in the autumn, can be sure of enjoying a clear month's good shooting,

with a most interesting journey and an invigorating holiday thrown in, and at an expense which is no greater than that which is readily incurred by hundreds of English sportsmen in hiring the most modest shooting here, whereon game is comparatively very scarce, while many other advantages indicated above are also absent. Of course no one in his senses would expect, in a new, wild and thinly inhabited country like Manitoba



INTERIOR OF SMOKING ROOM, SLEEPING CARS, IN USE ON
THE CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY.

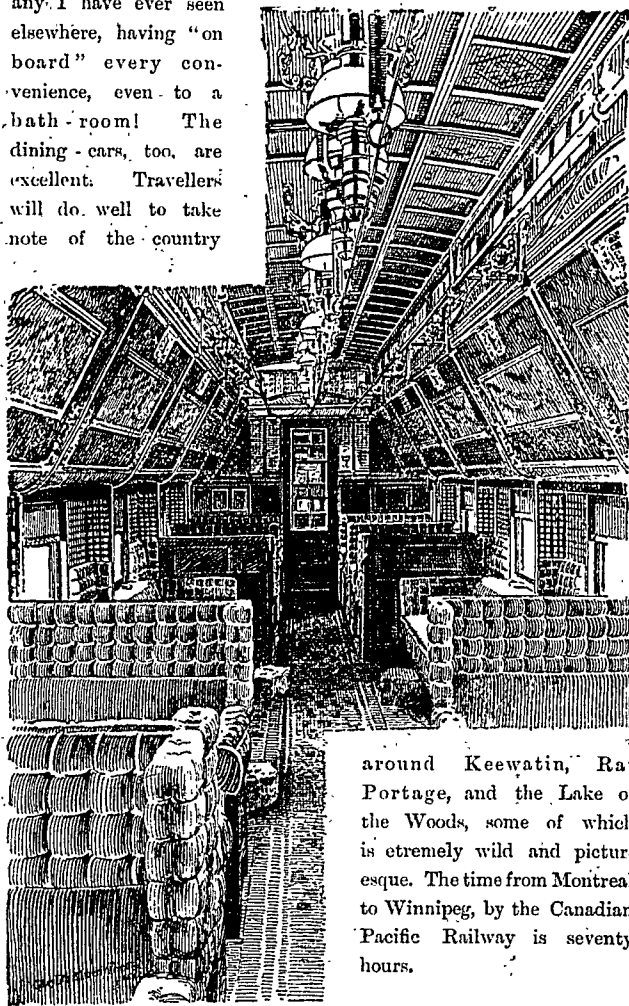
all those little comforts and conveniences which are readily to be obtained here. A little "roughing it" when in camp is, of course unavoidable, but with most true sportsmen this is likely to add to, rather than to detract from, the enjoyment of the trip,

Baggage should be stored at one of the hotels in Winnipeg whilst the sportsman is out in the country. The Queen's and the Leland House are the best, though neither is first-rate. The Clarendon, a large and fine house very recently opened, may now afford greater comfort, but of this I know nothing from personal experience. The Manitoba Club is a most comfortable and convenient club, managed strictly on English lines, and few visitors of any distinction are allowed to pass through Winnipeg without enjoying the most welcome hospitality of its members. Fairly good quarters may also be obtained at Brandon, Carberry, Portage la Prairie, and some of the other towns throughout the Province, while shelter of some kind (though not always very desirable) may be had at all; and along every road, over which there is an appreciable amount of travel, will be found, every twenty or thirty miles, a house known as a "stopping-house," kept by the thrifty wife of some fairly well-to-do settler, who is generally also the Postmaster, and who makes a business of accommodating travellers to the best of her ability. In the absence of a regular stopping-house, almost any settler who has the necessary accommodation, will gladly do his best to shelter travellers for the night for a small consideration. No one need think he is taking a liberty in asking for such accommodation, as it is quite customary to request it in case of need. It will, however, usually be found to be the most comfortable and independent plan to take a tent and live in it. These can either be hired for the time, or purchased outright. From £10 to £15 per month will secure a waggon, or buckboard, and team, with a man to drive the same, according to quality and season—that is to say, whether the horses are in demand for harvesting or autumn ploughing. Perhaps, considering that these operations are usually proceeding busily during the sporting season, it might be found cheapest to purchase horses outright, as the loss on resale when done with would probably be less than the cost of hiring. Tents are systematically let out at several places in Winnipeg. A small oil stove, such as Ripplingill's, is very useful. A well-trained dog, for retrieving ducks, is a valuable adjunct to any shooting-party, but one which is difficult to obtain in the North-West. A small folding boat, too, will often be found very useful. The best time to arrive is late in August, or during the first half of September. Attendants (though with very hazy ideas of sport from an English point of view) are easily and cheaply obtained in Winnipeg, where also camping requisites of all sorts are to be had. If divided among a party of three, the cost of outfit, horses, attendant, &c., is very small.

Visitors going to Manitoba certainly cannot do better than travel by the Canadian Pacific Railway from Quebec, Montreal or Toronto. Not only is it far the shortest, but it is also the best. I have travelled extensively over many different American lines of railway, and can give a strong and altogether unbiassed opinion in favour of the Canadian Pacific. It is undoubtedly one of the best managed, cheapest, and most accommodating railways on the American Continent. It would, of course, be absurd to expect the speed and punctuality of a crack English line on a newly-constructed road through an almost uninhabited country; but everything that is possible to do to ensure comfort is done; and I can truly say that, though I have travelled much in

America. I have never travelled so sumptuously over long distances as by this line. Some of the new "sleeping-cars" are more splendidly fitted than

any I have ever seen elsewhere, having "on board" every convenience, even to a bath-room! The dining-cars, too, are excellent. Travellers will do well to take note of the country



INTERIOR OF SLEEPING CAR.

around Keewatin, Rat Portage, and the Lake of the Woods, some of which is extremely wild and picturesque. The time from Montreal to Winnipeg, by the Canadian Pacific Railway is seventy hours.

MILLER CHRISTY.

CHELMSFORD, November, 1888.